

IDAHO STEELHEAD SEASONS, RULES AND INFORMATION

WHAT IS A STEELHEAD?

Steelhead are rainbow trout longer than 20 inches in length in the Snake River drainage below Hells Canyon Dam, the Salmon River drainage (excluding lakes and the Pahsimeroi and Lemhi rivers), and the Clearwater River drainage (excluding that portion above Dworshak Dam and lakes). Rainbow trout longer than 20 inches in length with the adipose fin clipped (as evidenced by a healed scar) are defined as steelhead in the Snake River from Hells Canyon Dam upstream to Oxbow Dam, and in the Boise River from its mouth upstream to Barber Dam, and in the Payette River from its mouth upstream to Black Canyon Dam, during steelhead seasons.

Only steelhead with a clipped adipose fin (as evidenced by a healed scar) may be kept. These are steelhead produced in fish hatcheries which have had their adipose fin removed as juveniles. All steelhead with a non-clipped adipose fin must be released immediately to preserve the remaining wild steelhead and because wild steelhead are listed as Threatened under the Endangered Species Act (see page 64). Some hatchery steelhead are not clipped as part of a program to develop additional runs of natural spawning fish. These steelhead must also be released immediately.

Licenses—Steelhead Permits

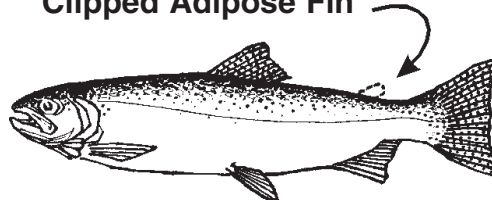
Resident Fishing License	\$23.50
Nonresident Fishing License	\$74.50
Junior (14-17 years) Resident and Nonresident Fishing License	\$12.50
Steelhead Permit (Full Season License Required)	\$11.50
Nonresident Salmon or Steelhead 3-day License/Permit (includes 3-day general fishing)	\$28.50

(Prices are accurate for January 1, 2004
but are subject to change by Legislative action.)

Anyone, except those expressly exempt, must have a valid fishing license and steelhead permit to fish for, reduce to possession, or catch-and-release steelhead. No steelhead permit is valid unless it has been properly sealed in the permit portion of the tag/permit pouch.

Any person who does not qualify as a resident must purchase either a nonresident season fishing license and a full-season steelhead permit or a nonresident 3-day salmon/steelhead license/permit.

Clipped Adipose Fin



In order to qualify for resident status, a person must be domiciled in the state for at least six months. See page 3.

Children (including nonresident children) under the age of 14 are exempt from purchasing steelhead permits. They may fish without permits if they are accompanied by a valid permit holder, provided that any fish caught must be recorded on the permit holder's card and counted in the permit holder's legal bag and possession limit. A resident child under 14 may purchase a permit without a license so that he or she may catch his or her own limit of steelhead.

When excess hatchery steelhead become available at fish hatcheries or trap facilities, they may be released in the Snake River between Hells Canyon and Oxbow dams, and in the Payette or Boise rivers to provide additional fishing opportunity. When hatchery steelhead are stocked by IDFG in these waters, a steelhead permit will be required.

METHODS OF TAKE

- No person shall kill or retain in possession any steelhead which has been hooked other than in the mouth or jaw. Any steelhead hooked other than in the mouth or jaw must be released unharmed. See snagging definition on page 9.
- Steelhead may be taken only with barbless hooks in the Salmon, Snake and Clearwater river drainages. Bending the barb down to the shank of a single, double, or treble hook will meet this requirement.
- Steelhead may be taken with barbed hooks in the Boise and Payette river drainages, and the Snake River between Hells Canyon and Oxbow dams.

PLEASE NOTE

- Steelhead caught in a legal manner must be either released or killed immediately after landing.
- All fish that are hooked, landed, and not immediately released shall be counted in the limits of the person hooking the fish.
- No person shall have in the field or in transit any steelhead from which the head or tail has been removed.

PERMIT VALIDATION

When a steelhead has been hooked, landed, and reduced to possession, the angler hooking the fish must immediately:

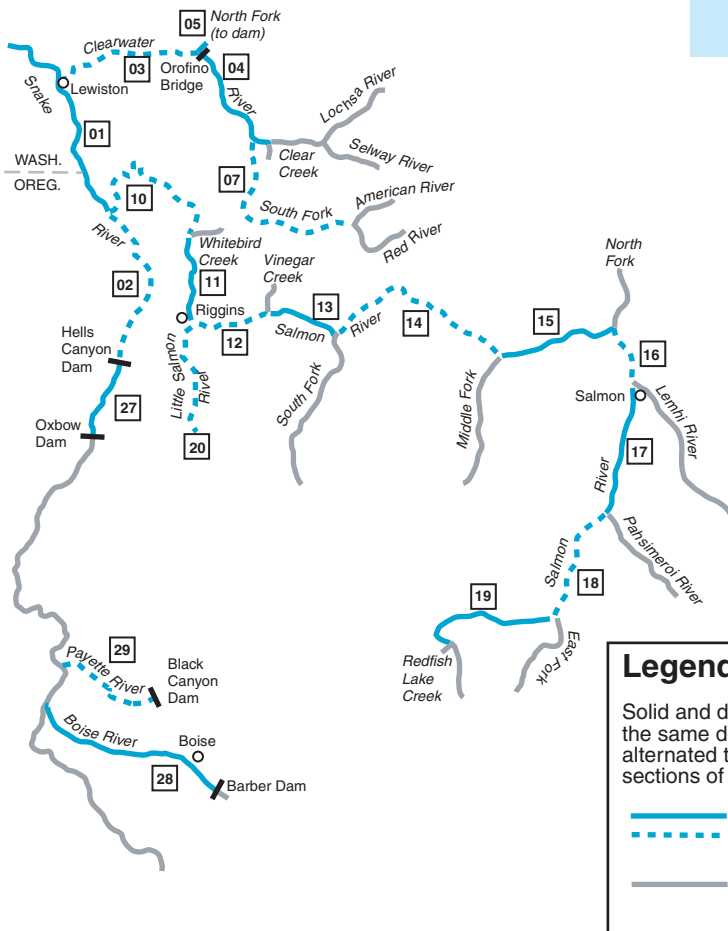
1. Completely remove one numbered notch (*) from the permit;
2. Look up the number code from the River Location Code List and write it in the space provided; and
3. Enter the month and day the fish was caught.

However, when a steelhead is released unharmed, as in no-harvest fishing, the angler is not required to make an entry on the permit.

“For example, a fish caught from the Salmon River between the Middle and North Forks on October 22 would be entered as:”

FISH BIRD	MONTH DAY	LOCATION CODE	MONTH DAY	LOCATION CODE	FISH BIRD
1		S	10-22	15	21
2		P		F	22
3		R			23
4		I		L	24
5		N			25

REMOVE NOTCH COMPLETELY!



RIVER LOCATION CODES

Snake River

- Snake River, downstream from Salmon River 01
- Snake River, from Salmon River to Hells Canyon Dam 02
- Snake River, Hells Canyon Dam to Oxbow Dam 27

Clearwater River

- Clearwater River, downstream from Orofino Bridge .. 03
- Clearwater River, upstream from Orofino Bridge ... 04
- North Fork Clearwater River 05
- South Fork Clearwater River 07

Salmon River

- Salmon River, downstream from Whitebird Creek ... 10
- Salmon River, Whitebird Creek to Little Salmon 11
- Salmon River, Little Salmon to Vinegar Creek 12
- Salmon River, Vinegar Creek to South Fork 13
- Salmon River, South Fork to Middle Fork 14
- Salmon River, Middle Fork to North Fork 15
- Salmon River, North Fork to Lemhi River 16
- Salmon River, Lemhi River to Pahsimeroi River 17
- Salmon River, Pahsimeroi River to East Fork 18
- Salmon River, upstream from the East Fork 19

Other

- Little Salmon River 20
- Boise River 28
- Payette River 29

STEELHEAD HARVEST SURVEY

Steelhead harvest and angler participation are estimated by a telephone survey conducted within a few weeks after the season closes. You may be called and asked about your effort and success.

Please save your permit until three months after the season has closed or until you are contacted by IDFG.

STATEWIDE STEELHEAD LIMITS

3 per day, 9 in possession, 20 per season.

- An angler may not take more than 20 steelhead during the spring season and not more than 20 steelhead during the fall season.
 - **Special Restriction:** Any angler who has attained the bag, possession or season limit on those waters with steelhead limits, must cease fishing for steelhead including catch-and-release fishing.

STEELHEAD SEASONS

- **Spring Season:** January 1 through April 30, except as below.
- **Fall Season:** September 1 through December 31, except as below.

Any person may fish for steelhead on a catch-and-release basis August 1 through December 31 in any water open to fishing for other species EXCEPT in the Middle and South forks of the Salmon River and their tributaries. All steelhead caught during the no-harvest period shall be released unharmed immediately. A valid fishing license and steelhead permit are required to fish for steelhead.

SEASON EXCEPTIONS

SPRING SEASONS

- **LITTLE SALMON RIVER**
 - **Spring Season:** January 1 through May 15
- **SALMON RIVER** from its mouth upstream to Long Tom Creek (1/4 mile upstream from the Middle Fork Salmon River):
 - **Spring Season:** January 1 through March 31
- **SNAKE RIVER** from Hells Canyon Dam upstream to Oxbow Dam, **PAYETTE RIVER** from its mouth upstream to Black Canyon Dam, and **BOISE RIVER** from its mouth upstream to Barber Dam:
 - **Spring Season:** January 1 through May 31

FALL SEASONS

- **CLEARWATER RIVER**
 - **Fall Season Catch-and-Release:** July 1 to harvest season opener
- **CLEARWATER RIVER** (mouth to Memorial Bridge of U.S. Highway 12 at Lewiston)
 - **Fall Season:** August 1 through December 31
- **CLEARWATER RIVER** (and Middle Fork Clearwater River) from the Memorial Bridge of U.S. Highway 12 at Lewiston upstream to Clear Creek; South Fork Clearwater River from its mouth upstream to the confluence of American and Red rivers; and the North Fork Clearwater River from its mouth upstream to Dworshak Dam:
 - **Fall Season:** October 15 through December 31

AREAS OPEN TO STEELHEAD FISHING

- **SALMON RIVER** from its mouth upstream to the posted boundary 100 yards downstream of the Sawtooth Fish Hatchery weir, near the town of Stanley.
- **LITTLE SALMON RIVER** from its mouth upstream to the U.S. Highway 95 bridge near Smokey Boulder Road.
- **SNAKE RIVER** from the Washington state line at the confluence of the Snake and Clearwater rivers upstream to Oxbow Dam.
- **CLEARWATER RIVER: MAINSTEM and MIDDLE FORK CLEARWATER RIVER** from its mouth upstream to Clear Creek:
 - **Special Restrictions:** Fishing from the shoreline along the perimeter of Dworshak National Fish Hatchery is PROHIBITED. Fishing from motorized watercraft is PROHIBITED from the Clearwater River Bridge at Orofino upstream to the mouth of Clear Creek.
- **NORTH FORK CLEARWATER RIVER** from its mouth upstream to Dworshak Dam:
 - **Special Restrictions:** Fishing from the shoreline or wading along the perimeter of Dworshak National Fish hatchery is PROHIBITED. Fishing from any watercraft or wading is PROHIBITED between the posted line approximately 150 yards upstream from the mouth of the North Fork Clearwater River and the Ahsahka Highway 7 Bridge. When fishing from the Ahsahka Highway 7 Bridge, it is unlawful to take or attempt to take any fish downstream of the railroad bridge. Fishing from the railroad bridge is PROHIBITED.
- **SOUTH FORK CLEARWATER RIVER** from its mouth upstream to the confluence of American and Red Rivers.
- **PAYETTE RIVER** from its mouth upstream to Black Canyon Dam.
- **BOISE RIVER** from its mouth upstream to Barber Dam.

Adult steelhead are only present in the Boise and Payette rivers and the Snake River above Hells Canyon Dam when stocked by IDFG. Check with regional offices to determine if steelhead have been released that year. A steelhead permit is required to fish for and keep steelhead (rainbow trout longer than 20 inches with a clipped adipose fin).

STEELHEAD FISHING IN BOUNDARY WATERS

Snake River between Idaho and Oregon or Washington: The holder of a valid Idaho fishing license may fish the Snake River where it forms the boundary between the states of Idaho and Oregon or Washington, subject to the fish and game laws of Idaho, but may not fish from the shoreline, including wading, and may not fish in sloughs or tributaries on the Oregon or Washington side. An Oregon or Washington license holder has the same rights and restrictions with reference to the Idaho side. Any angler who fishes on the Snake River or any other water forming an Idaho boundary is entitled to have in possession only the limit allowed by one license regardless of the number of licenses in possession.

THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

Several of Idaho's fish species have been listed or are candidates for listing under the 1973 federal Endangered Species Act. The ESA was established to protect species from extinction. Species are listed when population levels drop so low that they are at high risk of extinction. Species already listed under the ESA as either Threatened or Endangered are protected from any form of "take". Several other Idaho species are candidates for federal listing. While overharvest has been a factor for some resident species, for the most part, these fish are in trouble because their habitat has been damaged or destroyed. IDFG encourages land and water management agencies to make decisions that will benefit fish and wildlife. However, the Idaho Fish and Game Commission's authority is restricted to either regulating harvest or stocking fish, so these are the only tools IDFG has to restore depleted populations or, in some cases, preserve future options.

ANADROMOUS SALMON AND STEELHEAD

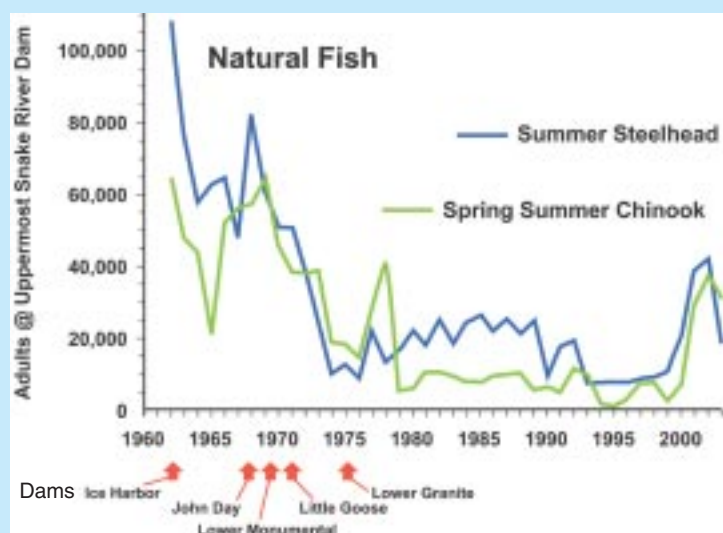
All of Idaho's wild anadromous (ocean-going) salmon and steelhead are listed as Threatened or Endangered under the ESA except for coho salmon, which were declared extinct in the mid-1980s. Spring/summer and fall chinook salmon are listed as threatened and so are wild steelhead. Sockeye salmon produced in Alturas, Pettit, and Redfish lakes in the Stanley Basin are listed as endangered. It is against state and federal law to fish for, harass, or harvest these fish. They are protected to conserve their critically low populations. As the figure illustrates, adult returns of natural salmon and steelhead are only a fraction of returns of the 1960s. Natural spring chinook salmon and re-introduced coho salmon in the Clearwater drainage are not listed under the federal ESA, but are protected by state law.

Construction of dams and reservoirs on the lower Snake and Columbia rivers has been the primary cause for the decline of Idaho's wild salmon and steelhead. Dams and reservoirs have created unfavorable migration conditions, especially for smolts, the young salmon and steelhead going to the ocean. Rebuilding endangered and threatened runs of salmon and steelhead depends primarily on changing how dams and reservoirs on the migration route from Idaho to the ocean are operated. More normative conditions are needed to ensure consistently higher survival. Because the migration corridor is the major factor, IDFG is participating in decision-making about future conditions of the lower Snake and Columbia rivers to advocate for better survival conditions. IDFG is also active in helping address lesser problems such as harvest, spawning and rearing habitat degradation, and negative interactions with hatchery fish, and bird predation on smolts in the estuary.

Angler Be Aware! Idaho steelhead harvest was restricted to only steelhead with a clipped adipose fin (ad-clipped) in 1987 to help maximize harvest opportunity for hatchery produced fish without causing unacceptable loss of naturally produced steelhead. This approach has allowed anglers to keep an annual average of 40,000 hatchery steelhead for the last 10 years. This approach has also been used for hatchery chinook salmon, allowing 43,000 non-listed hatchery salmon to be harvested in 2001 when a surplus was available. Idaho has not had a fishery for wild chinook salmon since 1978.

You may encounter threatened and endangered anadromous salmon, steelhead and other protected salmon. Avoid fishing or boating in riffle areas where salmon and steelhead are seen or are likely to spawn. Carefully and quickly release any wild anadromous salmon or wild steelhead unintentionally caught. Please help preserve threatened and endangered salmon and steelhead and also preserve your privilege to fish for other fish in waters used by federally protected anadromous salmon and steelhead.

Know the Difference: Refer to the illustrations on page 15 to make sure you can distinguish between a small chinook (which may not be harvested) and a juvenile rainbow. Small sockeye (not illustrated) will be bright silver when found in the Salmon River in the spring or early summer and must also be released immediately. Because of their similarity to resident rainbow trout, most streams with populations of wild, juvenile steelhead have special rules to protect them, such as catch and release rules in the Middle Fork of the Salmon River drainage.



WHEN AND WHERE YOU CAN EXPECT TO SEE LISTED/PROTECTED SALMON AND STEELHEAD IN IDAHO

Sockeye	Spring & Summer Chinook	Fall Chinook	Steelhead
July - September	April - September	August-November	August-May
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Snake River below Hells Canyon Dam Salmon River Redfish Lake and Creek Alturas Lake and Creek Pettit Lake and Creek 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Snake River below Hells Canyon Dam Salmon River & tributaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Snake River below Hells Canyon Dam Clearwater River Lower Salmon River 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Snake River below Hells Canyon Dam Clearwater River Salmon River Large tributary streams to these rivers

IDAHO'S RESIDENT FISH SPECIES

Bull Trout: Bull trout were listed as a threatened species under the ESA in June 1998. Historically, the range of bull trout in Idaho included the Snake River and most tributaries upstream to Shoshone Falls, the Little Lost River and nearly all northern Idaho waters. Today, bull trout are found primarily in upper-elevation streams north of and including the Salmon River, in upper reaches of the Boise, Payette and Weiser rivers, in the Little Lost River and in some large, cold-water lakes. A tiny population also persists in a Bruneau River tributary. Spawning, egg incubation, and early rearing of bull trout are confined to upper-elevation streams. Large rivers and lakes provide habitat for migration and adult rearing. Declines in population numbers and habitat have been attributed to overharvest, competition and hybridization with introduced species, construction of migration barriers, and degradation of habitat.

Under its authority to set fishing rules, the Idaho Fish and Game Commission in 1993 declared bull trout may no longer be harvested. Since the Commission does not have the authority to regulate land or water management activities that might alter bull trout habitat, it has directed IDFG to assist and cooperate with management agencies to design practices which will not harm bull trout habitat.

Know The Difference: The ability to identify bull trout and closely related species is important in rebuilding Idaho's bull trout population. In most streams and lakes, IDFG encourages anglers to keep brook trout (an introduced species) by offering a bag limit of 25.

- Brook and bull trout look alike to many anglers. However, there are two easily recognizable differences:
 - Brook trout have dark spots or marks on the dorsal (top) fin, and they have three colors in the lower fins (a white leading edge, followed by a black band, and an orangeish color in the rest of the fin).
 - Bull trout have no dark spots in the dorsal fin, and only two colors on the lower fins.
 - See illustrations on page 14 for comparison.
- Bull trout and lake trout are present together in a few Idaho lakes. They can also be identified by the color of their spots:
 - Lake trout have only light-gray colored spots on their bodies and fins.

- Lake trout have a deeply forked tail fin.
- Bull trout have red, orange or yellow spots primarily on their bodies or tail. Some light spots may be visible on the dorsal fin or tail.
- See page 14 to note these differences.

Sturgeon and Burbot (ling): The white sturgeon, found in the Snake, Salmon and Kootenai rivers, is the largest of all North American freshwater fish. They are extremely long lived. They take over 20 years to mature and then may only spawn every few years. This, combined with major losses of the free-flowing river habitat they require, has made it necessary to prohibit all harvest. The Kootenai River is closed to fishing for sturgeon.

The Kootenai River, in the northeast corner of the Idaho Panhandle is home to a genetically distinct population of white sturgeon and to the only freshwater member of the cod family, the burbot (ling). Populations of both have declined. In 1972, when Libby Dam was completed upstream it reduced productivity and drastically changed the river's flows. Spawning conditions for sturgeon and burbot were changed. In 1994, after IDFG attempts to convince the dam operators to alter flows and thereby avert listing failed, the Kootenai River white sturgeon was listed as Endangered under the ESA. However, since then mitigation efforts by the Corps of Engineers have improved spawning conditions, but young sturgeon are still not surviving well enough to recover the population. The burbot is listed by the State as a Species of Special Concern, and was petitioned for listing under the ESA. It was not listed because it is common in other northern states. Burbot are now very rare in Kootenai River.

Protected fish may not be removed from the water. Any caught must be released immediately, unharmed.

Other Species: Other Idaho fishes at risk include all five native species and subspecies of cutthroat trout and redband trout. They are listed by the State as Species of Special Concern because of their sensitivity to habitat changes and other threats such as hybridization. Several are under consideration for federal ESA listing. Rare but not coming under ESA scrutiny are Pacific lamprey, Bear Lake whitefish, Bonneville whitefish, Bonneville cisco, and several small fish seldom seen because of their small size and secretive nature (leatherside chub, sand roller, Bear Lake sculpin, Wood River sculpin and Shoshone sculpin).